

The Conflagrations :

COMPRISING TWO POEMS, AS FOLLOWS.

FIRST.

THE BURNING BOAT:

*A SERIO-SATIRIC POEM ON THE DESTRUCTION BY
FIRE OF THE STEAMER*

ROYAL TAR,

(OF SAINT JOHN, N. B.)

IN PENOBSCOT BAY, ON THE 25TH OCTOBER,

1836.

SECOND.

THE BURNING CITY:

A DESCRIPTIVE POEM;

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE LAMENTABLE FIRE WHICH TOOK PLACE
IN THE

CITY OF SAINT JOHN, N. B.

ON THE MEMORABLE NIGHT OF SATURDAY 14TH JANUARY,

1837.

By ARTHUR SLADER.

Saint John, N. B.

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1837.

THE CONSTITUTION

OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ARTICLE I

SECTION 1

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

SECTION 2

The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

SECTION 3

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have the Qualifications requisite for Senators of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

SECTION 4

The House of Representatives may impeach and try a President, or a Judge, or any Officer of the United States, in Case of Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

SECTION 5

The Senate shall have the sole and exclusive Power of trying all Impeachments, when sitting on that Purpose, and when sitting shall be on Oath or Affirmation.

SECTION 6

The Senators and Representatives shall receive Compensation for their Services, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.

SECTION 7

The House of Representatives shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

SECTION 8

The Congress shall have Power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

SECTION 9

No Bill for raising Revenue shall originate in the Senate, but may pass the Senate by yeas and nays.

SECTION 10

No Bill for raising Revenue shall originate in the Senate, but may pass the Senate by yeas and nays.

To the intrepid Individuals who so meritoriously
signalized themselves on the memorable occasion
on which this Poem is founded ; as well as to the
Community of Saint John—the following pages
are respectfully dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

Saint John, February, 1837.

The Burning Boat.



"A sad tale saddens doubly when 'tis long—"
BYRON.

I.

"On for a Muse of fire! that would ascend"—
So some one somewhere somewhat strangely said;
A stranger thought perhaps was never penn'd
From modern rhymers' metre-stricken head:
I have no Muse—I ask no Muse, my friend—
For this plain cause—the *Nine* are long since dead:
Though many a modern *mimic-muse's* shell
Sounds most *unmusically musical*.

II.

I have a subject—therefore need not roam
About the intellectual realms to find one;
I have a *theme* of fire, that must come home
To many a heart—and suited to remind one
Of life's precarious tenure: though to some
Unfeeling—reckless—deaf—unthinking blind one
This, like all other themes allied to gravity,
May prove quite dull—so strange is man's depravity.

III.

But read, good reader,—just read the *beginning*—
And then *read on*: 'twill be no fault of mine
If nought herein be found that's graphic—winning—
And suited to that nameless taste of thine:
'Twill *certes* be no very heinous sinning
To mix the grave and gay in the same line:
I like a *smile*; nor much dislike a *sigh*—
But shun those who '*continually do cry*.'

IV.

Lord BYRON was the greatest of the grand
 Masters of Song—(Pardon me, noble shade
 For *titling* thee, when pass'd into the land
 Unseen—*unknown* ;—*titles* on earth are made)—
Byron, I say, had ever at command
 The choicest, most extensive, "Stock in Trade,"
 Of thoughts, words, high imaginings illimitable—
 As for his *rhymes*,—those I pronounce inimitable.

V.

I've some design in writing such a *poem*—
 (*Preface*, plain reader)—to the sombre story
 Which constitutes the body of this Poem :—
 Perhaps you think it rather desultory—
 If you view Byron as I wish to *shew* him,
 You'll not pronounce these stanzas nugatory ;
 He was a Poet, "take him all in all"—
 Sublime—low—grave—gay—*tragi-comical* :

VI.

A perfect *swallow* in the "art divine"—
 Now high aloft, anon adown how low ;
 This is a *novel* simile of mine ;
 But 'tis so like the man compar'd, you know :
 Whose path eccentric I cannot define,
 And few could follow if I could, I trow :
 Compound how strange !—we ne'er may see another—
 Tears in one eye, while smiles illum'd the other.

VII.

Be patient for a moment—and I'll leave
 This paragon of rhyme, whom I have merely
 Named as the Bard who in one line could *grieve*,
 And, in the very next, *laugh* as sincerely ;
 I mention this—for, really, I believe,
 (*His* being the style I love so very dearly)
 You'll find me rather *slightly* as I write—
 A quality I deem quite requisite.

VIII.

Now, then, I'll leave all other thoughts afar,
Just for a time—and hasten to my theme;
 The sick'ning story of the ROYAL TAR—
 Full-fraught with horror; no poetic dream—
 No whims that *are not*, but sad woes that *are*;
 How diff'rent is my subject, from a scheme
 Drawn up by *Fancy's* all-creative pow'r
 T' amuse mock-mourners merely for an hour.

IX.

Who's seen the *infant*, like a stricken flow'r,
 Sinking into the grave?—*men* fiercely breathing
 Their spirits out, amid the cannon's roar,
 In the last agonizing death-pangs writhing,
 On battle-field, where hosts on armies pour,
 Mens' madd'ning passions like a cauldron seething?
 Who's seen the *convict* on the scaffold shivering,
 Upon his pallid lips a deep curse quivering?

X.

Who's gaz'd on Death, in its most awful mien
 Of direst vengeance, with a tearless eye?
 Who's mused, unmoved, on the most sick'ning scenes,
 Nor felt the struggling of a single sigh?
That monster-man, and only he, I ween,
 Can read this tale of tears unfeelingly:—
 Some such there were, who acted in this Drama;
 They'll have their station in my Panorama.

XI.

Yes—there are hearts of adamant, believe me—
 A selfish, save-who-can Society;
 (Or rumour and experience both deceive me):—
 Reader, perhaps you know as well as I
 What here I hint at—there ere 'twill relieve me,
 Just at the threshold of my history,
 From giving you my meaning in detail;—
 To do it in its place I shall not fail.

XII.

—It was a modest morning, and the sky
 Perhaps a little treach'rous, though serene ;
 The passengers and crew all joyously
 Had got on board ; I doubt not 'twas a scene
 (I saw it not) of jocund revelry—
 A numerous, motley company, I ween ;
Music was there, with its enlivening swell ;
 " And all went merry as a marriage-bell."

XIII.

Oh ! could I moralize—perhaps *you* *can*—
 And if you *can*, pray do so—I shall *not*.
 Besides the *souls*, there was a Caravan,
 I do not mean of Eastern pilgrims—but
 Of stately beasts, large birds—a Pelican—
 Perhaps some *Monkies* ; which I hope were put
 In their own place,—a Lion—Elephant—
 I shall not name them all, because—I *can't* ;

XIV.

So leave them. Of the *human* family,
 Youths, Maidens, Matrons—some on pleasure bent,
 And some on profit, perchance you'd see
 The man on schemes intent ;
 Another *here*, on the city—
 All in their floating gaily pent ;
 All, in their minds some fancy turning,
 Few thought of *drowning*—less still of *burning*. (1)

XV.

" Stand by ! unmoor the Boat upon the wave—
 The wave, each gallant vessel's darling home"—
 'Twas done—she steer'd her onward, stiff and brave,
 Majestically through the salt sea foam :
 A bow—a parting smile perhaps they gave ;
 But who was dreaming of the death to come ?
 " Huzza !"—The Band struck up " God save the King,"
 Or—some such national enliv'ning thing. (2)

XVI.

"She stems it gallantly—her proud array,
 And stately bearing chase away all fear—
 She'll traverse the wide waters many a day,
 And ride o'er wrathful surge for many a year;
 Billows and tempests harmlessly will play
 Around and o'er her;—soon too she will near
 Her destin'd port in safety:"—But, avast!
 Hush! Hush! *this hour, fond dreamer, is her last!* (3)

XVII.

—Unskill'd in *Pyrotechny*, still I know
 That fire ignites things, and that wood will burn;
 Unskill'd, too, in *Hydrometry*, I trow,
 I'd know a flowing pail from empty churn:—
 'Prodigious knowledge!'—you respond—Just so—
 Plain housewife science, which e'en cooks can learn:
 But careless cooks, you know, and so do I
 Neglect their boilers, and they boil off dry.

XVIII.

But more of this anon.—My similes
 Are *often* humorous, and *always* good;
 Besides, I like digressions such as these,
 They're never out of place—when understood:
 And while I write *t' inform* I write *to please*—
 As every wise and well-bred writer should:
 —Now *here* I turn my Pegasus again,
 And fly from playful pleasantry to pain.

XIX.

'Twas post-meridian, and not far from three—
 "Fire!" was the cry.—(How that terrific sound
 Appals us, even though on shore we be!)
 Both fore and aft those horrid cries resound,
 Commingling with the murmurs of the sea:
 While all above, and all below—around—
 Was frantic uproar---clamorous confusion,
 If you've a heart 'twill quiver at th' allusion. (4)

XX.

Imagine---but 'tis no 'magination---
 And history's motley pages, since the day
 Of suffering humanity's creation,
 Exhibit no such tale of misery ;
 Nor such a most tremendous combination
 Of horrors---such delirium of dismay,
 As at the luckless TAR's *self-conflagration*,
 Usher'd in *Death*---I won't say *Immolation*.

XXI.

But to return.—Imagine a high wind---
 A cloudless sky---and land on every side---
 Lions and Tigers ramping, though confined---
 The boiling breakers of a tumbling tide---
 Flames roaring---screamings not to be defined---
 A huge unwieldy Elephant, untied ;
 Conscious, perhaps, (*sagacious fool*) how soon he
 Should fall by flame, or flood---alas poor Chany !

XXII.

No chance t' escape!--A hundred souls, well nigh,
 Are hurrying o'er the burning Steamer's deck ;
 'Twere passing vain to say how rapidly
 The crackling Tar became a flaming wreck :
 To man the pumps the smothering seamen try,
 But want of respiration proves a check---
 They burn and scarcely breathe---are scorch'd and smoked,
 At the same moment---charr'd, as 'twere, and choked ! (5)

XXIII.

The *storm* is up too, with a Giant's wrath
 Whom wine has madden'd. How one Element
 Delights to meet another in its path
 Of devastating rage ! The *waves* are bent
 On to the sounding shore ; the *whirlwind* hath
 A combat with the floating tenement :
 The billow, tempest, flame, all join in chorus,
 And fan the flame of fury now before us.

XXIV.

DESTRUCTION shouts upon his tempest-car,
 And like a war-steed to the charge bounds on ;
 While Elements are mingling in the war,
He raves in joy to list to wail and groan
 Which high upon the gale are borne afar---
 The sharp, shrill scream---the mutter'd murm'ring moan :
 TERROR, the tyrant grim, smiles dark as hell
 To see his vassals work his will so well.

XXV.

—Now, reader, 'tis a pity, I must grant,
 That I should fall down from a flight so high ;
Abruptly too ;---but then, again, I can't
 Feel at my ease in rapturous rhapsody
 For any length of time : besides I want
 Just now to picture to your mental eye,
 Raft, rope, plank, ladder---and the "Jolly Boat"---
 With other safety carriages that float.

XXVI.

The "*Burning Boat*" had *two* boats---but the one
 Though small indeed, was larger than it's brother ;
 Twice eight intrepid souls rush'd headlong on
 And fill'd the larger---but they *left* the other :---
 At times like this 'twere better "cut and run"
 Than get wet in the water---scorch or smother :
 Now, waggish reader, pray, what makes you wink so ?
 For Heaven's sake, Sir, or Madam, don't you think so ? (6)

XXVII.

Sixteen male passengers aboard that boat
 Are snugly wending on their wat'ry way ;
 Safely, (and no doubt seriously) afloat---
 Nought to annoy them, save, perhaps, the *spray* ;
 With bag, and baggage, trunk, clonk, cap, and coat---
 'Twould be unkind from *these* to run away :
 Now, reader, mark---nor let it be forgot---
 The boat *could not* return---the crew *would not*.

XXVIII.

O Sympathy, fair daughter of the skies!

Where wast thou *then*?---I know where thou wast *not*:---

I cannot stop *e'en now* to moralize---

You'll sicken if you gaze on this foul blot,

On man's much boasted sensibilities:

I leave the sixteen to their *lucky lot*---

I feel, (and so do *you*, or read no more)

A loathing which I've sometimes felt before.

XXIX.

Return we to the flaming fearful wreck---

Region of horror---dungeon of despair:

I see the *little* boat is off the deck---

Stout hearts are in her---fellow-feeling's *there*---

The manly soul acknowledges no check

Where danger, dread, and desolation are:

See how she nears the mass of dire confusion,

Of dying screams and desp'rate dissolution. (7)

XXX.

See, see! a heaven-directed sail ahead!

And bearing down upon the field of flame:

Swift as the wind, as if by Mercy sped---

(On mercy's errand certainly she came:)

Greater had been the number of the dead

Were she not sent to rescue: but the same

High hand by which the thunderbolt is hurled,

Helps, solaces, and saves a sinking world.

XXXI.

The Veto nears them---nearer, and more near---

Our gallant little boat now lustily

Her generous work begins. How very dear

Must *life* be to the man about to *die*!

What struggles, what heart-energies were there,

To save poor shiv'ring, frail mortality!

The little boat had soon enough to see to,

Fill'd with a crew she bore them to the Veto.

XXXII.

Th' intrepid "Life Guard's" prowess nought appals,
 And back she flies to save as many more ;
 She plies it proudly---picks up panting souls,
 Gasping amid the elemental roar ;---
 This oft repeated, 'till tired nature falls
 Exhausted, and down drops the heavy oar.---
 Oh ! what a heavenly toil to tire and faint in !
 Surpassing Painter's, aye e'en *Poet's* painting. (8)

XXXIII.

One Hero worn out in the *saving service*,
 Another, no less daring, fills his post ;
 And manfully he plies---while every nerve is
 Strained strongly.---Would not *these* have been the boast
 Even of a Nelson, Duncan, Howe, or Jervis ?
 A handful of such men outweighs a host
 Of lily-liver'd runaways from dangers---
 Frighten'd by fears to which stout hearts are strangers. (9)

XXXIV.

Their deeds I only speak of "in the gross"---
 And could I write them in detail, perchance
 Their sterling merit would but suffer loss---
 Such worth my eulogy could ne'er enhance :
Praise, in comparison, would be as dross
 To gold---but then 'tis pleasant e'en to glance
 At actions greatly generous as these,
 Grown too much out of fashion now a days. (10)

XXXV.

But to the *wreck* again.---*Some* framed a raft,
 With little, I should think, if *any* hope ;
 "A sort of thing at which one would have laugh'd,"
 If laughter could have lived there : some a rope,
 Or any thing laid hold of---fore and aft
 Rushing in headlong haste : they scarce could hope
 To save themselves ; but hope had nearly left them,
 And frenzy of their senses had bereft them. (11)

XXXVI.

Planks, ladders, spars, and e'en *unfitting* things
 Were put into a raft : (of no great use—
 Such trials were the feeble whisperings
 Of dying hope :) all moveables cast loose
 That well might float---so close the spirit clings
 To its clay tenement, it gives no truce
 To thought, when death is near, in framing schemes
 Their union to preserve---death-dawning dreads :

XXXVII.

At least it proved so here---so strong it blew
 There was no chance of safety : the high wave
 Precipitated headlong the crush'd crew,
 While the sea, yawning, open'd them a grave :
 There were "too many" on it, though "so few"—
 O'ercrowded, it disjointed---and the brave,
 The timid---husbands, wives, were hurried
 Together down, and in the deep were buried.

XXXVIII.

Perchance some swimmer, struggling for his breath,
 Rose, and sent forth a farewell gurgling cry ;
 Wrestling, as 'twere, with his opponent Death,
 In strong convulsive pang of agony :
 ('Tis hard to breathe one's last, the adage saith)—
 'Till, vanquish'd by his stouter enemy,
 He fail'd the unequal combat to support,
 " And going down head foremost,---sunk in short."

XXXIX.

One fearless maid, with manlike energy, (12)
 Leap'd overboard the *saving-boat* to gain—
 But fruitless the attempt---and, failing, she
 Divided with her death-nerv'd arm the main ;
 And, through a boiling, circumvolving sea,
 Swam round the flaming funeral pile : again
 In the same track she braved the bouncing billow,
 Then---among sea-nymphs found a peaceful pillow.

XL.

Shrill sounds of wailing---infants, mothers crying---
 The feeling heart grows sick at the narration---
 The lurid flames, beneath, above them flying,
 Mock even the stretch of our imagination :
 The living---(but the *living* were the *dying*)
 Envied the *dead*, and sought in consternation
 To meet death in a shape less horrible
 As from the *wreck* into the *wave* they fell.

XLI.

Mothers, on fire! plunged in their "hopes" before them--- (13)
 Children of their unchangeable affection :
 An hour before how much they did adore them!---
 ---I leave you to pursue the dread reflection :
 * * * * *
 * * * * *
 And clip this stanza of two lines—a way
 I've got, when---I have nothing more to say.

XLII.

We'll leave the strugglers---and their tale half told---
 "A sad tale saddens doubly when 'tis long :"
 Enough to know that fire, flood, fear, and cold
 Slew thrice ten souls, and more---the weak, the young, (14)
 Together sank there---manhood's prime---the old---
 The fearless and the fearful---feeble---strong,
 Became mere footballs for the sporting tide---
 But, 'tis a gloomy thought that *thus* they died.

XLIII.

Night came---and drew her veil of darkness o'er
 The picture that I've fail'd in---the *saved* crew
 Were safely landed---near the midnight hour
 The Steamer was descried the darkness through
 Floating in flame at distance from the shore :---
 Thus trumpets Fame---I saw it not 'tis true,
 And only those who did can *feel* the story
 Which in this chit chat way I've laid before ye.

—'Twas very late last evening when I ended
 The stanza just above this---and you know
 Whene'er I write a verse 'tis seldom *mended* ;
 (At least you know it when I tell you so :)
 I was quite drowsy, and to bed I wended---
 Where every other drowsy head should go :---
 I just make this slight mention of the time,
 Because I do not much admire the rhyme

XLV.

Found in the last two lines.—We'll now review
 Or muse upon the dread catastrophe,
 Which we, *in words alone*, have waded through :
 --Pity such accidents as that should be—
 They swell the dead list, grieve the living so—
 And teach the practice of anatomy
 To the voracious sharks, the pinching sturgeons,
 And the whole faculty of sharp sea-surgeons.

XLVI.

But—shall we draw deductions such as these
 So *ludicrous* almost, at least so *light*,
 From such concatenated miseries ?
 Can *these* console us ? or can these requite
 Mankind for their bereavements ?--Or can these—
 —I pause— * * * * *
 But some men say, *sans reservation mental*,
 This accident was strangely accidental.

XLVII.

Speaking thus strangely, I'll proceed with more
 Deductions strange from this strange casualty—
 'Tis strange that when men venture from the shore
 They should not take their eyes—that is, not *see* :
 'Tis strange—but that I've hinted at before—
 That water should evaporate—and we
 Not find that secret out until the day
 The "TAR" ignited in Penobscot Bay.

XLVIII.

'Tis strange that fire should render iron red hot—
 The fact was lately proved, and mournfully ;
 (A circumstance which should not be forgot ;
 'Twill be remembered at Penobscot Bay) : —
 Strange that combustibles, *wood* or what not,
 When brought into a close affinity
 With "*actual cautery*," should kindle, blaze,
 And then consume—we know it in these days !

XLIX.

But ah ! 'tis not so strange that man should be
 Unfeeling—reckless of his brother's fate :
 Alas ! it is so—but, in charity
 I break off from a subject which I hate—
 That man, frail man, a varnish'd vanity,
 And but a bubble at his best estate,
 Should arm himself with inhumanity,
 Is constitutional insanity.

L.

I've come to stanza *Fifty*—and the last—
 The *best* perhaps you'll think it ; not so I—
 The thirty-third is better—but you've past
 That and the thirty-fourth, of course hard by ;
 I've only four lines more ; so I shall haste
 To close with Byron's words :—" I shall not try
 " Your patience further than by this short sample—
 " 'Twere well if others follow'd my example."

THE BURNING CITY :

A DESCRIPTIVE POEM,

**IN COMMEMORATION OF THE LAMENTABLE FIRE WHICH TOOK PLACE
IN THE CITY OF**

SAINT JOHN, N. B.

ON THE MEMORABLE NIGHT OF SATURDAY, 14th JANUARY,

1837.



By ARTHUR SLADER.



*" Illicet ignis edax summa ad fastigia vento
" Volvitur, exuperant flammæ, furit æstus ad auras."*

VIRGIL.

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The Burning City.



I.

Go to—describe the indescribable,
And draw what never can be represented—
Some subjects mock the painter's, poet's skill,
Feeble if written—feebler still if painted :
Portray the course of wild Euroclydon,
Or any tempest-wind you think upon ;
Describe the lightning's glare, the thunder's roar,
And that which never was described before :

II.

Then take thy plastic pencil, or thy quill,
And aid me, man of genius genuine,
In something which I fear transcends my skill,
And yields at least sufficient work for thine :
A THOMSON'S almost all-descriptive pow'r's
Might powerless fall before this theme of ours ;—
No more of this—I have " a tale t' unfold,"
Therefore proceed to tell what *can be told*.

III.

'Twas night—'twas *nine*—'twas freezing—and the moon
Serenely sailing through a starry sky,
Unclouded in her majesty—the noon
Of a keen brumal night was drawing nigh—
The air-gauge down at zero, or below,
And the doom'd City was a field of snow ;
The citizens on various business bent,
Each on his several purposes intent. (1)

IV.

But few, perhaps, were slumming: How the cry
 Of "Fire!" by various voices breaks upon
 The startled ear, at night!—high and more high
 That fear-fraught sound is rais'd—men hurrying on
 To the devoted spot—th' alarm-bell tolls
 It's summons shrill—the rattling engine rolls—
 Firemen, equipp'd, in universal motion,
 Each crowded street an animated ocean.

V.

An hour before how different was the scene
 Presented to the nightly passenger,
 Through the ill-fated streets, no longer seen
 Save in their smouldering ruins! The brisk stir
 Of business closing for the week—the talk
 Of fellow travellers on their homeward walk—
 The thoughtless laugh of festive jollity—
 I do not say of riot-revelry.

VI.

The scene is changed—"and such a change! O night,"
 And flame and terror, "ye are wondrous strong,"
 And heart-appalling! see yon lurid light
 Emitted from the burning piles among:
 A beacon of distress—no longer now
 The cry of "where's the fire?"—the glaring glow
 Points out the way to the remotest ken
 Of each alarm'd *alarming* citizen.

VII.

"And then and there was hurrying to and fro,"
 And thick'ning crowds, and signals of distress,
 And aching hearts 'which but an hour ago'
 Were wrapp'd in what the world calls happiness,
 That transient something which mankind enjoy—
 That 'airy nothing,' ne'er without alloy;
 That mockery of life, that fragile flow'r
 Which buds, blooms, withers, dies, in one short hour.

VIII.

To check the spreading flames attempts are made
 Mysteriously in vain! The engine throws
 Some ineffectual sprinklings—other aid
 As fruitless is at hand;—hook, bucket, hose
 Powerless alike are dropp'd—not long the fight
 'Twixt fire and water; early in the night
 That contest ceased—the mighty mastery
 Was gain'd—supported—kept, to victory.

IX.

A mandate from on high, what earthly pow'r
 Can frustrate? Thitherward these flames shall run
 And there shall cease their influence to devour
 And there shall finish the dread work begun.
 All hope to stay their progress ended here—
 When sounds discordant burst upon the ear,
 'Stand clear,' 'come on,' 'haste,' 'stop,' 'come here,' 'go there,'
 'Help,' 'help,' 'avaac,' 'stand here,' 'run—*everywhere*.'

X.

And wild and high those mingled sounds were flying—
 CONFUSION sat upon his Babel-throne;
 Men 'hoarsely bawling'—children, females, crying—
 Some doing something—others (quite undone)
 Were gazing with a frantic idiot stare
 Upon the dazzling, overpow'ring glare
 Of the triumphant element. How wild
 'Fire! Fire!' will make a woman, or a child:

XI.

And certainly 'tis startling—when you know
 A little time may bring the flames to bear
 On your own mansion, ten doors off or so,
 At greater distance or perhaps more near,
 Just as it happens—surely 'tis appalling
 When torch-like brands upon your roof are falling;
 When fire, as thick as snow flakes, falls around one,
 'Tis quite enough, I take it, to confound one.

XII.

Forth from their gloomy vaults roll pipes of wine,
 With puncheons, their comates in 'durance vile'—
 Their prison-house no longer can enshrine
 These rare deposits—men in 'rank and file'
 Are rolling from the fury that's approaching
 What some, perhaps, imagin'd worth the broaching;
 Barrels, and all the hoop-bound brotherhood
 Were mix'd *pell mell*, the worthless with the good.

XIII.

Did you not hear—(or rather who did *not* ?)
 That crackling crash of falling beams of fire ?
 Some massive roof precipitately brought
 Down from it's tottering height—up bursting higher
 The fresh-fed flames voluminously ride
 'The passing wind—and rolling far and wide
 Break through the brittle barriers that would check
 (Peeds before whirlwinds) the resistless wreck.

XIV.

Now spring the active, and lay hold the strong—
 (Already many a mansion is no more ;)
 While fear pervades the half-distracted throng ;
 A simultaneous rushing from each door,
 And showers of sparkles dancing through the sky,
 Proclaim the fearful ruin to be nigh :
 The rising winds, too, with the flames conspire,
 And drive, with lightning speed, the flood of fire.

XV.

Loud clamours and shrill clangors now arise
 Of headlong, headstrong, hurrying disorder ;
 'With sound of bugle, mix'd with the drown'd cries
 Of 'fall in here,'—(fruitless attempt at order)—
 Th' ARTILLERY, and the gallant INFANTRY,
 Onward in crowds to posts of danger flee ;
 Each means to *save* uncensingly essaying,
 The flaming fire-brands in their faces playing. (2)

XVI.

Now mark the *ne plus ultra* of wild freaks
 Which thoughtless man in mad confusion plays—
 What frangibles industriously he breaks
 In a variety of frantic ways :
 Mirrors and other brittle things are thrown
 Down from on high; and—smash'd upon a stone :
 The costly cabinet in haste o'erturning,
 With *care* he *spoils*, to—save it from the burning.

XVII.

What rich profusion now of merchandize
 Hath left the shelves of the deserted store :
 Exposed, (but not for sale, forsooth,) to eyes
 Which ill can brook temptation—but no more
 Just now, of *that*—I'll give it by and by ;
 (The *farce* you know *succeeds* the tragedy—)
Satan was there—not a mere looker-on,—
 As much on the alert as any one. (3)

XVIII.

Bales, boxes, bundles, beautiful displays
 Of human skill to deck the beauteous fair ;
 (Sorts without number in these modish days)
 With piles of coarser and more ponderous ware,
 Obstruct the way—books, bonnets, mantles, muffs,
 Bandboxes, butter, heterogeneous stuffs—
 With fancy ornaments of gilt and glitter,
 'Magnificently mingled in a litter.'

XIX.

'Tis midnight—and whole streets now smouldering lie,
 In their own ashes, levell'd to the dust—(4)
 Sad spectacles of the uncertainty
 Of man's terrene possessions—though to trust
 In stone and wood and perishable things
 (Baubles of earth which take to them swift wings
 And soon are seen no more,) suits blind mortality
 Perhaps by some invincible fatality.

XX.

The fire is at its height—the firmament
 Is glowing, glaring, with a lurid light ;
 The well-cemented, massive walls are rent
 Asunder instantaneously, despite
 Of their iron bonds and inlaid fastenings,
 Braces and bolts and other *feeble* things ;
 The subtle fire divides the very earth,
 As if it long'd to see some young volcano's birth. (5)

XXI.

Defend, defend the fortunes of the press !—
 Types, tympan, cases, chases, and so on—
 (The Printer's indispensables—unless
 Supplied with these, his 'occupation's gone')—
 Are now in jeopardy ;—the flames are nearing,
 And busy hands those implements are clearing
 From out their seat of danger, with *success*—
 Defend, defend the fortunes of the press.

XXII.

One office is in flames—anon one more
 Shares in the spreading ruin—but *success*
 Crowns the attempt to rescue (as before)
 The ponderous press and its appendages ;
Another, and *another* now prepare
 The fate just hinted at above to share ;
 The flames are check'd in their wild wantonness,—
 And Heaven defends the fortunes of the Press !

XXIII.

—Now to another point direct the eye,—
 Where greedy fires are flying to devour ;
 By turns a pitchy cloud is roll'd on high,
 By turns hot embers from the ruins pour :
 The flame, so fierce at first, fresh fury gains
 ' And Vulcan rides at large with loosen'd reins ;'
 Huge piles, at his approach, aside are thrown,
 ' And shiver'd by the force come tumbling down.'

XXIV.

Behold yon wharf—and wonder as you gaze ;
 Moscow in miniature ! it mocks the skill
 Of pencil or of pen ; fat vapours raise
 A nauseous odour—storms of sparkles fill
 The heated sky :—a sudden blaze, by fits,
 Forth issues as the plague the timbers eats ;
 Nor engine-stream, nor strength of mortal hand
 Could e'er such mighty mastery withstand.

XXV.

The ponderous anchor then and there is bent,
 Half eaten by the fire's intensity—
 The sated foe, his fury well nigh spent,
 Enjoys the ruinous catastrophe :
 And prodigies of fiery feats performs,
 While falling fabrics his high hand deforms ;
 With breath of lightning, and a voice of thunder,
 He seems to cleave the very earth asunder.

XXVI.

Here, too, a stream of liquid glass is flowing—
 Vessels of iron are melted down like lead ;
 And massive metal of all forms is glowing ;
 So fierce the fury of it's fiery bed :—
 Down to the earth, and upward to the sky
 The flaming, flickering, lambent volumes fly ;
 To all combustibles their wrath extending,
 They still prevail, ascending and descending.

XXVII.

As melts the snow beneath a fervent sun,—
 As flits the gossamer before the gale,—
 As flies the nimble hare when coursers run,—
 Before the wind as well-trimm'd vessels sail,—
 So speeds the flame ; and so the lengthen'd tier
 Of lofty buildings sinks—so disappear
 Before each wonder-struck spectator's eyes
 Those rich receptacles of merchandize.

XXVIII.

See, too, the flames have reach'd those masts hard by ;
 And spirally around their summits play,
 Down creeping to their bases rapidly ;
 " Stand by"—(the passing order)—" cut away"—
 The flame-clad spars down tumbling o'er the side,
 Lay quench'd and floating in the ambient tide ;
 Or mast and hull had haply gone together,
 The one a prime conductor to the other. (7)

XXIX.

The sun is up—the enemy hath seiz'd
 His final victim—see that edifice,
 (Like some tall monarch of the forest, razed
 By sudden tempest blast)—how soon it lies
 A heap of blazing beams ! the flaming storm
 Of the whole range hath scathed the noble form ;
 'Those towering fabrics which we gazed upon
 Last eve, have vanish'd—are forever gone.

XXX.

'Tis now the Sabbath morn—this morning's sun
 Looks down upon a sad, a sickening scene ;
 So fair a portion of our City gone !
 Undreamt of at his going down, I ween ;
 In ashes our commercial vineyard lies,
 Nor can it quickly from its ruins rise ;
 Nor soon those giant fabrics tow'r again
 Along that smoking desolated plain.

XXXI.

The besom hath pass'd o'er it—the red pest
 Hath executed its dread purposes ;
 Obedient to th' Omnipotent behest—
 But the same hand which brings to nothingness,
 Uplifts the prostrate—moves his counsels on,
 In a mysterious way, to man unknown ;
 Performs His will—too oft misunderstood,
 From *seeming* ill educing *real* good.

XXXII.

As the fictitious *Phoenix* from the fire
 Endow'd with youthful strength is feign'd to rise ;
 So shall our City's walls again aspire
 In fairer form before our gladden'd eyes—
 Soon shall the work, the grateful work, begin,
 With sound of hammer and the busy din
 Of active artizan, who cheerly cries,
 "Thrice happy ye, whose walls already rise"— (8)

XXXIII.

But can we pass this portion of our page,
 Nor upward raise a thought? Behold the care
 Of Heaven for wayward mortals! though the rage
 Of elements in uncontroll'd career
 Those fabrics razed, no *mortal tenement*
 Was crush'd beneath them;—though the scourge was sent,
 No victim perish'd on the blazing pile,
 It rag'd—but Mercy hover'd o'er the while.

XXXIV.

But whence its origin? what caused the Fire?
 Are now the passing interrogatories—
 Men seek to know, but fruitlessly inquire—
 And I shall not just now record their stories;
 An over-heated stove-pipe might have lighted
 The well-fed flame—perhaps a cask ignited
 By careless hand, of rum inflammable,
 First fired the Town,—but that I cannot tell.

XXXV.

In stanza seventeen I think I hinted
 That thieves their work were plying—a dark tale—
 Too loathsome to be spoken, much less printed—
 To what extent man's vices will prevail!
 Th' archfiend that night commission'd his elect
 To help th' endanger'd, and their goods protect;
 A monstrous herd, half mortal and half devil,
 Whose virtue's vice, whose greatest good is evil.

XXXVI.

How well they execute their master's will !

Most faithful of all servants—with what zeal
They empty houses and their pockets fill.

And vehicles—so sweet the task to steal :
The sled, the sleigh, the boat, too, and the dray,
Fly o'er the snow, or cut their watery way ;
Freighted with spoils from ransack'd houses brought ;
But catana foils himself—the thieves were caught,— (9)

XXXVII.

Or some of them—may *Conscience* catch the rest,

And pierce them with its most envenom'd stings !
They pilfer'd from the ruin'd, the distress—

Kings were made beggars, beggars were made kings—
(T' indulge a little in hyperbole
Allowable, you know, in Poetry)—
But still 'tis said that pilfering was the order
Of that dread night of burning and disorder.

XXXVIII.

Severe the loss to many, though the fire

Scathed not their dwellings—the destructive hand
Of blind impetuous hurry—the desire

To save from burning, and the plundering band
All coalesced to lessen the sum total
Of their—*et cetera*—'tis hard to quote all—
But moveables quite numerous they say
Thus took unto them wings and flew away. (10)

XXXIX.

No more—a theme less loathsome claims attention ;

A subject which involves the common good—
I mean some method to prevent th' extension

Of kindling burnings—(hard to be subdued
When raging at their height)—a *means* at hand
A wisely organized and well-train'd band
Of Firemen, might hereafter stay the rage
Of—that which is the subject of my page.

XL.

The labours of the good were passing praise,
 Through that eventful, memorable night ;—
 Merit, which no encomium can raise,
 Nor poet paint, nor eulogy requite :
 Still there's a secret pleasure in recording
 Acts of humanity above rewarding ;
 While acts like *those* encourage the distrest,
 "Man's inhumanity"—you know the rest,

XLI.

If not, read Burns—but first read what's before you—
 Be patient, you are verging to the end ;
 If you should feel no int'rest, I deplore you,
 My most deplorable unfeeling friend ;
 " *You don't like poetry*"—now such a one
 Is fit for "spoils and treasons," and so on ;
 But you like truth—nor much dislike to know
 That you've escaped what others have pass'd through.

XLII.

You'll find some *prose* at th' end—some memoranda
 Explanatory of these burning Dramas—
 Quite handy if you should not understand a
 Flight of the wand'ring Muse : 'twill be the same as
 An index, an explicit glossary
 Of things obscure as 'twere—a sort of *Key*—
 You've found some indispensable obscurity
 No doubt,—or *else* no poetry in purity.

XLIII.

—But hark !—the laram-bell again proclaims
 The hour of danger—ere I close my lays
 Another lofty fabric, wrapp'd in flames, (11)
 Becomes a ruin'd shell :—not twice ten days
 Have pass'd between the burnings.—Here I end
 With fire, what first on mightier fires was penn'd ;—
 —Go—faulty sheets—seek to be understood,—
 By some deem'd nonsense, and by others good.

Notes to the Burning Boat.

—••••—

1. The Steamer ROYAL TAR, (of 400 tons burthen,) left St. John on the Friday previous to the disaster, with Ninety-three persons on board, including Crew and Passengers. In addition to which she had taken in the collection of Wild Beasts which had been travelling through New-Brunswick and Nova-Scotia. A number of the persons on board belonged to St. John; some bent on business, others on pleasure.

2. Every thing having been made snug on board, the Royal Tar left the harbour, the Band belonging to the Menagerie playing 'God save the King'—none dreaming of the awful catastrophe that awaited them.

3. Stormy weather ensued—the Boat was retarded in her progress—and was obliged to put in at Eastport, Little River, &c.

4. On Tuesday, 25th October, about 2 o'clock, P. M., it was discovered that the boiler had become dry—the Boat was therefore brought to anchor. In half an hour after she was discovered to be on fire, immediately over the boiler under the deck.

5. The cable was immediately slipped—sail set to run her ashore—and the fire-engine set to work: but such was the density of the smoke, and the rapidity of the flames, that the men were driven from the pumps, and nothing but a prospect of inevitable destruction presented itself.

6. A simultaneous rush was now made for the boats, of which there were but two—the larger of which was seized by sixteen of the passengers—who (with such of their baggage as they could lay their hands upon,) went before the wind to an Island about nine miles to the leeward—although the land was but one and a half miles to windward. They did not return to render what assistance was in their power, leaving their fellow passengers to their fate.

7. Captain Reed, (Master of the Boat,) got possession of the small boat, and kept near the burning Steamer, to do what could be done for the preservation of those on board—and at the hazard of his life did he ply lustily between the flaming wreck and the United States schooner VETO, which then hove in sight and made directly for the Royal Tar.

8. This mode of saving the people was rendered both slow and exceedingly dangerous by the violence of the weather—but it was kept up as long as a soul was left alive on board the Steamer.

9. Mr. W. G. Brown, (the Steward,) when Captain Reed was perfectly exhausted, took his place in the little boat, and made three trips to the burning Boat, for the rescue of the unfortunate.

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10. Every exertion was also made by Mr. Black, the Mate, and Mr. Atkins the Pilot, to alleviate the sufferings of the wretched people.

11. A temporary raft was made with ladders and planks, on which some of the sufferers took refuge—but it was of little avail, as most of them were precipitated into the sea, and sunk to rise no more.

12. One poor girl, who had been driven overboard by the fire, swam twice round the Steamer, endeavouring to reach the Boat in which Captain Reed was picking up the people; but not succeeding, and being exhausted with fatigue and cold, found her grave in the billows.

13. The women, when actually on fire, threw their children overboard and jumped after them. The screams of those poor creatures, together with the roaring of the two vexed elements, combined to produce a scene which beggars description.

14. Total lost—Passengers, 29; Crew, 3,—32.

Notes to the Burning City.



1. When the alarm was sounded, it was ascertained that a Store on Peters' Wharf, occupied by Messrs. Robertson & Hatton, was in flames: and so rapid was the fire in its progress, that not even the books and papers of the Firm were saved.

2. Now, although it cannot be supposed that the Military could be actuated by feelings exactly similar to those entertained by the Citizens, who were so particularly, so *personally* interested;—they nevertheless vied with the latter in the most unremitted exertions, and their services demanded and gained the tribute of grateful acknowledgment.

3. As is too common in cases of this sort, *thefts* were numerous: and the villainous miscreant was robbing the unfortunate in all directions—like the vulture on the field of carnage preying upon the afflictions of suffering humanity.

4. The scene at this time was terrifically awful, and awfully grand! The City in flames—the atmosphere brilliantly illuminated; and masses of fire darting with meteoric velocity through the air.

5. After the flames became so extensive, the people were paralyzed in their endeavours to arrest them; and their efforts were thenceforward directed solely to the saving of property.

6. Two Printing Offices were totally destroyed, but the office materials were fortunately saved. The contents of other Printing establishments were also removed in consequence of the contiguity of the fire, which providentially however, did not reach them.

7. The loss in shipping would doubtless have been great, had not the rising tide favoured the removal of several large vessels, which were towed off as soon as the water permitted.

8. The City's motto: "O Fortunati! quorum jam mœnia surgunt."

9. And not only *caught*, but "sent to their own place."

10. Number of buildings destroyed, 115. Property to the amount of £250,000.

11. An extensive Brewery, greatly, though but *partially* damaged.

ERRATUM.—Page 13, Stanza XXXVII., line 7, after the word "timid," supply the word '*children*.'

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